

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

JULY 2000

JULY HAPPENINGS

The July meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at noon on Thursday, July 20, at the Kate Lobrano House, 108 Cue Street, Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi.

Our guest speaker will be the noted potter, Talle Johnson, director of the Bay Clay Studio, a partnership with the Bay Saint Louis Division of Cultural Affairs.

Mr. Johnson received his bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee, did post graduate work at Georgia State University, the Memphis Academy of Art and the University of Southern Mississippi. He earned his master's degree from William Carey College where he taught from 1993 to 1999.

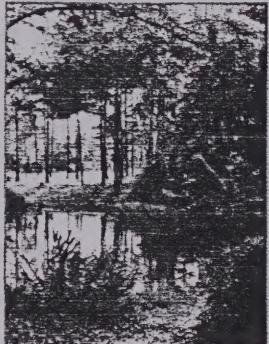
This will be an excellent opportunity to learn something about the history and making of pottery as well as to enjoy seeing some of the work of talented local artists.

Call 467-4090 for luncheon reservations at \$6.00. As always, please call early to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating.

SOCIETY NEWS

We had a delightful visit this week by Mr. Donald Cue of California. He is a great-grandson of Emile Cue, for whom Cue Street was named. We appreciate the help many of you extended him in his search for his family's history as prominent Hancock County residents of the past. Mr. Cue brought us copies of some excellent See Society on page 3

HANDMADE
Unlikely Pair Saved the
WILDERNESS
Least Wild Land in Mississippi



DON SCHUELER

SHANGRI-LA IN KILN

"This was a much-exploited landscape that Willie and I were to embrace as our Shangri-La," Don Schueler wrote of their first 40 acres in Kiln bought in 1968. "Right off, we loved it, partly because we were already seeing it as it should be, and partly because, in the way of stray dogs, it looked as if it could use some tender loving care."

The hardwood forests were being obliterated to make way for pine plantations. Fires controlled underbrush of hardwood and other vegetation to make room for pines, as well as clearing areas to which hunters illegally enticed deer. While

the pines were fire resistant, the hardwoods, like oaks and magnolias, as well as wildlife, were not.

"The local people were practicing a First World version of the Third World's slash-and-burn syndrome. Unimpressed by the property rights of absentee owners, they set the hills afire every spring to eliminate the dry winter grass and pine straw, thereby inducing early grazing for their free-ranging herds of half-starved cattle," Schueler wrote.

"We wanted to learn about the Place's original flora and to supplement or reintroduce species in trouble or already gone," he wrote. "We found that those that may once have been here were intolerant of fire and preferred damp hollows where they could be safe."

Some years ago I committed an unforgivable *faux pas* by asking the noted naturalist Olaus J. Murie how best to kill the copperheads in my yard in North Carolina. His response was a withering look.

Reading Schueler's account * of the 25-plus years he and his friend Willie Brown spent reclaiming abused land and wild creatures in the sand hills of Kiln, I was reminded of my encounter with Murie.

**Hardwood Wilderness*, by Don Schueler, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996.

Schueler described floating one day in their pond and coming face to face with

Schueler described floating one day in their pond and coming face to face with a large cottonmouth. "I told him, 'I won't bother you if you don't bother me.' The snake was there next day and the two simply exchanged glances.

While working to make the Place safe for wild creatures, Schueler and Brown observed them like the parents of precocious offspring: "A gray squirrel was munching on a white mushroom, and I wanted to know how it knew the mushroom wasn't poisonous, while I, a certified intellectual with a Ph.D. and a book on mushrooms, knew no such thing."

Schueler and Brown worked in New Orleans and spent weekends at the "Place" as they called it. When Schueler retired from his teaching post at the University of New Orleans, he moved to the Place, with Brown spending more time there as his work week as a floor finisher was cut back. After Brown's untimely death in 1987, Schueler stayed on.

As Schueler pondered the future of the Place, he recognized that "the ecological diversity of the sand hills was vanishing at a rate of thousands of acres a year. The lands surrounding the Place "were fire-free timberlands in private holdings converted into cattle pasture or bestrewn with trailers of owners' offspring and in-laws."

Schueler decided to give the property, expanded by then to 240 acres, to the Nature Conservancy with the condition that he live there the rest of his life and the Conservancy maintain the land with a full-time caretaker in perpetuity.

The Willie Farrell Brown Reserve was officially dedicated in 1992.

Schueler's book is a tender memorial to his friend Willie, who shared his joy in saving endangered flora and fauna.

In their early years at the Place, Willie found a gopher tortoise under the vegetable garden. The gopher wasn't seen for years, but Schueler met him one day while roaming the Place, grieving the loss of his friend.

"I longed to bring gopher tortoises back to the Place. Without them, I felt, Willie's reserve was incomplete," he

wrote. He searched in vain for a replacement through naturalists and even the Audubon Zoo, but most experts claimed the creature was extinct.

Pausing one day while walking about the Place, "...some 20 feet away, the gallberry bushes beside the trail were stirred by something that was not the wind," he wrote. "Quietly, I moved forward a few steps. As I did so, the bushes parted and a black wizened face emerged into the sunlight, its old eyes peering up at me in mild surprise."

The small miracle was the chance meeting; "the big one was that he was there at all after almost 15 years' absence." Schueler backed off, resisting the temptation to place the gopher near Willie's grave, leaving it to find its own home. The next morning he found the gopher's freshly dug burrow on a slope close to Willie's grave.

I don't know if Schueler is still at the Place tending the vegetation and protecting the wildlife.

The Nature conservancy denied my request for directions to the Willie Farrell Brown Reserve, which is just as well.

Edith Back

FAFNIR

Transferred from the city to the Place, Fafnir, the foot-long alligator, was installed in a pen furnished with an old bathtub near the pond.

As Fafnir grew, so did his appetite and the price of horsemeat, his steady diet. Schueler found the "perfect solution": whenever he spotted a reasonably fresh-looking, more or less intact road kill, he pulled over to the side of the road to collect it. Brown didn't see the beauty of the solution, but Fafnir was delighted with the change in diet, according to Schueler.

They kept Fafnir until he was eight years old and seven feet long. "Two things happened that made us resolve to give him his freedom," Schueler wrote. "One was that alligators had been put on the federal Endangered Species list so there was no longer a market for their hides. The other was that Fafnir turned out to be a she rather than a he, a

fact that she made clear to us by undergoing a false pregnancy and then guarding the mud nest she had built with a touching but fierce display of maternal solicitude. After that there was nothing for it but to fatten her up on as many roadkills as we could find before roping her and carting her off to a wildlife management area in the Honey Island Swamp. There we pulled off the road beside a bridge, cut her loose with genuine emotion, wished her well as she slipped into the dark waters of a swampy creek....A year later on the same bridge, Fafnir came, as to a rendezvous, to bid us a friendly hello and a final goodby."

THE FOX HUNTERS

"During our first years at the Place, fox hunters loosed their hounds on or near our property at night. They would sit in their cars on the country road, drinking beer or moonshine, listening to what they called the 'music' of the baying pack as it pursued its quarry through the woods roundabout....After a couple of hours, they would toss their empty cans and bottles out the window and head for home, leaving their dogs to be collected in the morning. Meantime, the dogs would go on ransacking the woods all night, literally hounding foxes and occasionally young deer to death, and keeping hardworking folks from getting a decent night's sleep.

"We were not popular with this fox-hunting set. For one thing, there was Schaeffer [the Great Dane]. After we had been rousted out of our sleep a couple of dozen times by hounds coursing the Hollow, he decided he had had enough of their carryings-on. One night he got to his feet with a disapproving 'woof,' pushed the French doors open, and bounded out before I was awake enough to stop him.

"The middle ridge was bathed in cold moonlight. Schaeffer positioned himself our there, motionless as a cast-iron lawn statue, looking noble and heroic. For two or three long minutes he held that pose, staring off in the direction from which the increasingly loud houndish racket was coming. Then, suddenly the pack was in view, swarming up the slope - an eerie loping drift of about a dozen gray-

white shapes, howling their heads off.

"Schaeffer waited until they were perhaps a dozen yards below him. Then he launched himself from the ridge and came down on them like the proverbial wolf on the fold."

"I was running toward him in my bare feet, hollering 'come back, Schaeffer!'"

"Before I got anywhere near him it was all over. The hounds, fixated on the hot scent of the fox they were running, had been taken by surprise and utterly routed. They scattered, yelping with hysteria that struck me as a bit excessive. Having made his point, Schaeffer didn't deign to pursue them. The hounds, yelling woefully, headed back the way they had come."

LAFITTE AGAIN

The featured article in the June issue of *The Historian* omitted the citation, so here it is: *The Lafitte Case* by Ray Peters, Aurora, CO, Write Way Publishing, 1997.

The omission was the computer's fault, of course.

In memory of

Carroll Silverman Bowers
1916 - 2000

Society from page 1

photographs for our files. If you have any knowledge of the Cue family, please let us know and we will forward it to him.

We received a wonderful book in the mail from Mrs. Julia Cook Guice titled *John Rhodes, oysterman from Mandeville*. In addition to the Rhodes family, it also covers Cameron, Sanford, Balius, Smith, Fayard, Carco, Moran, Hebert, Quave, Paquet, Graveline and Juillet families. We appreciate this gift which will be a great resource for our researchers.

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

MONDAY	8 a.m.
through	to
FRIDAY	4 p.m.

THE HANCOCK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

COOKBOOK

We have announced the imminent publication of our long awaited cookbook featuring recipes from our members as well as a brief history of the Society and excerpts from the history of the city and county.

The books will be available to Society members in November and to the public in December at a tour of homes where some recipes from the book will be served.

Gift wrapped copies will also be available for Christmas gifts.

The books will sell for \$13 (add \$2 if you want us to mail the book for you).

For orders placed in advance, a gift certificate page can be included in the publication bearing your name and an inscription to the person for whom you are buying the book.

467-4090

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 Thomas Lee, Dallas TX
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 Jeanne Green, Bay Saint Louis, MS
 Bridget Wilkinson Rodriguez, Diamondhead, MS
 Mary Margaret Bernard, Waveland, MS
 G. S. Burkhart, Bozeman, MT
 Ann Duffy, New Orleans LA

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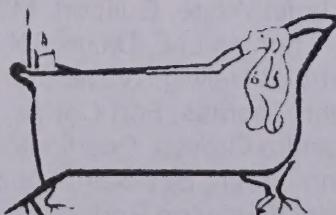
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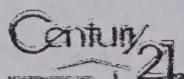
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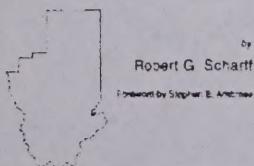
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